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THE BIBLE.

PASSAGES FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS SELECTED BY MRS. ELIZA R. SUNDERLAND.

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POETS' THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe. . .

The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

R. W. Emerson.

In holy books we read how God hath spoken
To holy men in many different ways;
But hath the present worked no sign nor token?
Is God quite silent in these latter days?

The word were but a blank, a hollow sound,
If He that spoke it were not speaking still;
If all the light and all the shade around
Were aught but issues of Almighty Will.

Hartley Coleridge.

We search the world for truth: we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said,
Is in the Book our mothers read.

J. G. Whittier.

The Bible as Literature.

I have always been strongly in favor of secular education, in the sense of education without theology; but I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up, in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion in these matters, without the use of the Bible. The pagan moralists lack life and color; and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Antoninus, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deduction which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible lay-teacher would do, if left to himself, all that is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with,—and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is familiar to noble and simple, from John O'Groat's to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso were once to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind, who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other books could children be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between the two eternities?

Prof. T. H. Huxley.

Only one literature there is, one great literature, for which the people have had a preparation,—the literature of the Bible. However far they may be from having a complete preparation for it, they have some; and it is the only great literature for which they have any. Their bringing up, what they have heard and talked of ever since they were born, have given them no sort of conversance with the forms, fashions, notions, wordings, allusions, of literature having its source in Greece and Rome; but they have given them a good deal of conversance with the forms, fashions, notions, wordings, allusions, of the Bible. Zion and Babylon are their Athens and Rome, their Ida and Olympus are Tabor and Hermon, Sharon is their Tempe; these and the like Bible names can reach their imagination, kindle trains of thought and remembrance in them. The elements with which the literature of Greece and Rome conjures, have no power on them; the elements with which the literature of the Bible conjures, have. If poetry, philosophy, and eloquence, if what we call in one word *letters*, are a power, and a beneficent wonder-working power, in education, through the Bible only have the people much chance of getting at poetry, philosophy, and eloquence. Chords of power are touched by this instruction which no other part of the instruction in a popular school reaches, and chords various, not the single religious chord only. The Bible is for the child in an elementary school almost his only contact with poetry and philosophy.

Matthew Arnold.

The New Testament will doubtless experience what has already happened to the Old; elements and scenery in it which are gradually withdrawn from literal acceptance and authoritative use, will pass into symbols of some truth and sanctity beyond themselves, and help the imagination to give form and color to spiritual things; and as the Egyptian bondage, the desert march, the water from the rock, the promised land, the courts of Zion, the holy of holies, have been lifted into emblems of the pilgrimage of man and the providence of God; so the baptismal dove, the temptation, the calming of the storm, the transfiguration, the Christ crucified, the Christ glorified, notwithstanding inequalities in their historical certainty, will retain their significance for the inward life, painting the crises of its drama and the transcendency of its vic-

tory. More and more of the modern Christian hymns do but touch for a moment the ground of historical incident, and pass on at once to some spiritual counterpart which is the real theme of the poet's inspiration. This gradual expansion of the original sources of Christian conception to embrace the new thought and larger sentiment which they themselves have been instrumental in creating, is the natural method of evolving the future from the past.

James Martineau.

The most original book in the world is the Bible. . . . It is in the nature of things that the highest originality must be moral. . . . People imagine that the place which the Bible holds in the world it owes to miracles. It owes it simply to the fact that it came out of a profounder depth of thought than any other book.

R. W. Emerson. (From the "Dial", 1840.)

De Quincey classified all writings as belonging either to the literature of knowledge, or the literature of power. There are books to which we go for information. They give us facts and ideas. They constitute the literature of knowledge. They teach us. Then there are books to which we go for inspiration; to which we turn for joy and pleasure, for strength and courage, for patience and endurance, for purity and peace. They constitute the literature of power. They move us. Herbert Spencer's books belong to the literature of knowledge. The "Imitation of Christ" belongs to the literature of power. The literature of knowledge needs to be reissued every century or generation or decade, corrected up to date. The literature of power is immortal; fresh to-day, though born millenniums ago.

In the literature of power the Bible ranks first. Whatever in Christian literature has most searching ethical and spiritual energy radiates the reflected light of the Bible: Augustine's "Confessions", "The Imitation of Christ", Fenelon's "Spiritual Letters", "The Saint's Rest", the "Pilgrim's Progress", in their most appealing tones echo the voices of the Bible. The Bible holds stored the ethical electricity from which Christendom has drawn, through centuries, exhaustless energy.

R. Heber Newton.

Seven Values of the Bible.

In what does the value of the Bible consist? Why should we, living in this late day—in times and circumstances of life so far removed from those of the Bible, and enjoying so much greater intellectual light than the men who wrote it enjoyed, continue to read it, and study it, and give it a place of honor among our books of religion?

(1) Portions of the Bible, at least, have confessedly a high literary value. There is no lack of authorities who rank some of the Psalms with the lyrics of Pindar and Wordsworth; the book of Job with the tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare; the prophecy of Isaiah and the Epistle to the Romans with any religious or ethical writing in the world. The first translation of the Bible into the vernacular was made so early, and so soon thereafter it became so emphatically the one great book of the people, that it has exerted an influence in moulding the English language and English literature vastly greater than any other book. Probably quite nine scholars out of ten, of those best qualified to judge, if called upon to select the best model in the language, of simple, terse, vigorous, and at the same time elegant English, would choose the Bible, in our common translation.

(2) The Bible occupies a far more central and important place in European and American civilization than any other book. Indeed it is doubtful if a man voyaging through our modern Christendom as a student of its history, its literature, its philosophy, its art, its politics, its institutions, would find himself so much inconvenienced by being unacquainted with Homer, Plato, Virgil, Cicero, Dante, and enough others to make a good dozen of the greatest writers of the world, outside

of the Bible, as he would by being unacquainted with the single volume of our sacred Scriptures.

(3) We have in the Bible a far more vivid and impressive picture than can be found anywhere else in literature, of what I may call the *evolution of religion and morals* on a large scale. The Bible presents us with the literary memorials of the growth of the people of Israel, through ten or twelve centuries of varied and wonderful history, from ideas of God and worship and morality that were at best very low and poor, up into such ideas as those taught by Jesus, which are confessed to stand in the front rank of the loftiest religious and ethical teachings of the world.

(4) The Bible is the parent of monotheism in the world so far as a book can be. It is worthy of note that the three great monotheistic religions all send back their roots directly or indirectly into our Scriptures,—Judaism and Christianity directly, and Mohammedanism indirectly.

(5) The Bible is a book of practical religion, and it is not until we come to study it in this light that we approach its highest value. With all its imperfections, it must still be confessed to be, on the whole, a book of unequalled moral earnestness, incitement, inspiration. With an iteration and reiteration that is untiring, and with an emphasis that is sometimes fairly tremendous, do all the great writers of the Bible impress upon us the grandeur of the moral side of life,—the importance of justice, truth, mercy, but especially righteousness in human conduct. A body of men of deeper moral earnestness, or more brave and loyal to what they believe to be true and right in religion, perhaps the world never saw, than were the Old Testament prophets. Bigots sometimes; true children of a rude age, some of them; occupying very different planes, morally and spiritually, as well as intellectually and socially,—they yet, as a whole, were grand men, whose words are even to-day moral bugle-calls to the race.

(6) So, too, with regard to all that which we commonly call the spiritual side of life—that side of life which includes love, gratitude, reverence, prayer, hope, faith, aspiration, worship,—it is not too much to say that the world has produced no book which has proved itself so powerful as a help and inspirer of men on this side of their being.

(7) Finally, the Bible is not only *our* book of religion, but it is a book rich with the very life-blood of all that was highest and holiest in the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the faiths, the prayers, the aspirations and yearnings, of our fathers, and our fathers' fathers, and nearly all the noblest men and saintliest women of all the Christian ages. How much that means, only men's hearts, not their heads, can answer. Surely such a book, with all its shortcomings, may well lay heavy claims upon our love, our appreciation, our reverence.

J. T. Sunderland. (*Compressed from Chapter IV. of "What is the Bible?"*)

The Two Views of the Bible,—Letter and Spirit.

There are two diametrically opposite views to be taken of the origin, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. One of these I call the theology of the spirit, and the other that of the letter.

I. The theology of the letter says of the Bible that it is "the word of God" in such a sense that every part of it proceeded by direct revelation from God. It is a supernatural revelation of God's truth, containing every thing necessary for the religious life of man; for his happiness here, and his hope hereafter. The writers were supernaturally and miraculously inspired, so that they could not make any mistake, and have not made any. There are no errors and no contradictions in the Bible. It is infallibly, verbally, literally true from end to end. All between its lids is the word of God. Its geology, astronomy, chronology, are perfect, and leave nothing to be desired. Its great men are all saints to be admired and imitated, their crimes excused and explained away. Its Jewish part and its Christian part are in exact and entire harmony;

and he who questions or denies anything in it is an infidel, who had better have never been born.

This view of the infallibility of the letter of the Bible,—or, as it was once called, its "plenary inspiration",—is not so very ancient, after all. It came up, in its extreme form, since the Reformation. Tholuck, the German theologian, a scholar highly esteemed in all orthodox circles, tells us, in his essay on Inspiration, that this doctrine arose in the controversy with the Roman Church. The Jesuits said, "We, in our church, have unity, confidence, assurance. We have an outward infallible Church to lean upon,—an outward authority to which all can appeal, an outward judge to decide all questions. You Protestants have no such authority; nothing infallible, nothing sure. You have only your own inward emotions, different opinions, changing moods." Pressed by this argument, says Tholuck, the Protestants came, by degrees, to maintain that they also had an outward infallible authority, namely, the infallible letter of the Bible; and at last were driven, by the heat of the controversy, to assert that not only the sense of the Bible, but the words, the letters, the Hebrew vowel-points, and the very punctuation, proceeded directly from God; and that the writers of the Bible were merely the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, the pen with which He wrote, the flute through which He breathed.

Now I will call your attention to the fact that the writers of the Bible lay no claim to any such infallibility as this. They nowhere say that they were inspired to write books. Two texts are quoted to prove this verbal inspiration; and because thus perpetually quoted, we may presume that they are the strongest which can be found. One says: "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." But it does not say that this made them infallible. Holy men *now* declare that they are moved by the Holy Spirit; but they do not profess to be infallible. The other text says that "All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, instruction", etc. Yes, profitable or useful, but that is surely not the same thing as infallible authority. These texts teach an inspiration which I also gladly accept; they do not limit inspiration to the Jews or to the Bible; they teach that all holy men and all sacred books come from God, and have more or less of his truth and power and goodness in them. Yes, "all scripture *is* given by inspiration"; the scriptures of every race and every land; every sacred book which has tamed man's pride, taught him to look up and adore, instructed him to be just, humane, true, and generous. No such books come wholly from the will of man; there is a divine element in them all, whether they are the Vedas of India, or the Koran, or the Dialogues of Plato, or Wordsworth's Ode to Immortality. For "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

There are many serious objections to this doctrine of the infallible inspiration of the Bible, some of which I will now mention.

To say that every statement in the Bible comes directly from God produces widespread unbelief. The Bible says that the world was created in six days; that, by the genealogies from Adam to Abraham, and Abraham to Christ, it was created less than six thousand years ago; that the sun, moon, and stars were all created at that time; that the visible universe, as well as the human race, has, therefore, existed only during that period. But geology shows us by infallible documents, written on tables of stone, that the life of the earth, with that of innumerable plants and animals, goes back for millions of years; and astronomy proves that the light which we receive to-day from some distant stars left them hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Again, students of the Old and New Testaments find many contradictions between different books. These contradictions are of no consequence at all unless we adopt this theory of the infallibility of the record, and then they become fatal.

Again, how many superstitions and cruelties have been sanctified by appeals to the letter of the Scriptures! During many centuries, thousands of poor wretches were burned alive as witches, and this

belief rested on the universal conviction of Catholics and Protestants that the Bible clearly taught the reality of witchcraft. So, in our day, we have seen slavery defended, and despotism defended, by the letter of the Bible. Because Paul said, "Slaves, obey your masters", and, "The powers that be are ordained of God", it was thought that God commanded men by Paul to submit to a despot like Nero, and ordered them to support a system which made of human beings chattels. So, too, to-day, single words of the Bible are quoted to defend the doctrine that God has made creatures certain to fall into sin, and then punishes them for that sin with endless torments.

This view of the Scriptures has also brought about a confusion of Judaism and Christianity. The Old Testament, in some minds, has more authority than the New. Men still keep the Jewish Sabbath which Christianity abolished. The sacrificial worship of the Jews, by which, from morning till evening, the great altar of the Temple ran with blood, has indeed been long abolished. But the influence of that system continues in the Catholic Church in the daily sacrifice of the Mass, and in the Protestant Church in the blood theology which teaches that God is unable to forgive sin except by bloodshed, and that by the blood of an innocent victim. The Apostles, who were Jews, accustomed to these perpetual sacrifices of the Temple, naturally said, "Christ is our sacrifice." "He is our sin offering." "It is his blood, not that of goats and sheep, which saves us." And so, literal theology builds on these natural Jewish expressions a whole theory of substituted suffering and vicarious sacrifice. Thus is the progress of thought arrested; thus is unbelief created; thus are we sent back from Christ to Moses by this Christian literalism.

But the chief objection to all this doctrine of the verbal infallibility of the whole Bible is, that the spirit is chained down by the letter; that the living power of the words and soul of Jesus are neutralized and nullified by being tied to the dead body of old traditions which have long since lost their power.

II. The theology of the spirit rises above all this level waste of dreary controversy It regards the Bible as inspired, but not infallible; inspired in a higher degree, by the same spirit which has also spoken to men in all the great scriptures of the race. It believes in the authority of the Bible, but it is the authority which truth always has over honest and candid minds.

It does not think it essential to decide when the books of the Bible were written, nor by whom; nor when they were collected and put together in the canon. The books remain the same, whoever wrote them; by giving their author another name you cannot rob them of a single note of power or of love. We are sure that the best books have remained, for they have been guarded by the love of mankind. They are not supernatural in any sense but that in which all our life is overflowed by something from above, all nature filled with a diviner beauty, and by which there is something of God in all the best things said and done by man.

I would believe more in divine inspiration than the old doctrine allows, not less. That teaches an occasional influx from God, coming and then going away; making a few prophets in a certain land and race, but nowhere else. I believe in "the prophets who have been since the world began"; in a God "who has never left himself without a witness in the world"; in a light "which lighteth every man who comes into the world".

I wish the Bible to be more loved and honored than it is now, not less. I wish it more a source of faith and hope than now; to bring us nearer to God than it now does; to make Christ more interesting, and more of a true Teacher, Master, and Friend. The better we understand it, the more shall we revere it; not with a blind homage, but with an intelligent admiration. The more freely that we use our reason, separating the chaff from the wheat, the more will the genuine power and beauty of the Bible be made manifest. God, who has given the Bible, has also given us our reason with which to examine and understand it, and we are guilty before him if we bury this talent in the earth and hide our Lord's money.

James Freeman Clarke. (From "Unitarian Affirmations",—much compressed.)

The Bible a Book of Man, by Man, for Man.

View it in what light we may, the Bible is a very surprising phenomenon. This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read of a Sunday in all the thirty thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up, week by week. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar and colors the talk of the street. It is the better part of our sermons. Our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed.

Now for such effects there must be an adequate cause. What is the secret cause of this wide and deep influence? It must be found in the Bible itself, and must be adequate to the effect. To answer the question we must examine the Bible, and see whence it comes, what it contains, and by what authority it holds its place.

Laying aside all prejudices, if we look into the Bible in a general way, as into other books, we find facts which force the conclusion upon us that the Bible is a human work, as much as the Principia of Newton or Descartes, or the Vedas and Koran. Some things in it are beautiful and true, but others no man, in his reason, can accept. Here are the works of various writers, from the eleventh century before to the second century after Christ, thrown capriciously together, and united by no common tie but the lids of the book-binder. Here are two forms of religion, which differ widely. We find numerous contradictions; conflicting histories which no skill can reconcile with themselves or with facts; poems which the Christians have agreed to take as histories, but which lead only to confusion on that hypothesis; prophecies that have never been fulfilled, and from the nature of things never can be. We find stories of miracles which could not have happened; accounts which represent the laws of nature completely transformed, as in fairyland; stories that make God a man of war, cruel, capricious, revengeful, hateful, and not to be trusted. We find amatory songs, selfish proverbs, skeptical discourses, and the most awful imprecations human fancy ever clothed in speech. Connected with these are lofty thoughts of nature, man, and God; devotion touching and beautiful, and a most reverent faith. Here are works whose authors are known; others of which the author, age, and country are alike forgotten. Genuine and spurious works, religious and not religious, are strangely mixed. The one part belongs to a mode of worship, formal and obsolete, the other to a religion, actual, spiritual, still alive. The one gives us a Jehovah, jealous and angry; the other a Father, full of love. The writers contradict one another, and some relate what no testimony can render less than absurd; but yet all taken together, spite of their imperfections and positive faults, form such a collection of religious writings as the world never saw,—so deep, so divine.

Now, unless we reject this treasure entirely, one of two things must be done: either we must pretend to believe the whole, absurdities and all, make one part just as valuable as the other, the law of Moses as the gospel of Jesus, David's curse as Christ's blessing,—and then we make the Bible our master, who puts common sense and reason to silence, and drives conscience and the religious element out of the church; or else we must accept what is true, good, and divine therein,—take each part for what it is worth, gather the good together, and leave the bad to itself,—and then we make the Bible our servant and helper, who assists common-sense and reason, stimulates conscience and religion, co-working with them all. A third thing is not possible.

Which shall be done? The practical answer was given long ago. Pious men neglect what does not edify. Men cannot gather grapes of thorns, grasp they never so lovingly; honest men will leave the thorns, or pluck them up. Now criticism,

which the thinking character of the age demands, asks men to do consciously and thoroughly what they have always done imperfectly and with no science but that of a pious heart,—that is, to divide the word rightly; separate mythology from history, fact from fiction, what is religious and of God from what is earthly and not of God; to take the Bible for what it is worth.

This doctrine takes nothing from the Bible but its errors, which only weaken its strength; its truth remains, brilliant and burning with the light of life. Take the Bible for what is true in it, and the first chapter of Genesis is a grand hymn of creation, a worthy prelude of the sublime chants that follow. It sings this truth: The world was not always; is not the work of chance, but of the living God; all things are good, made to be blest. The sweet notes of David's prayer; his mystic hymn of praise, so full of rippling life; his lofty psalm, which seems to unite the warbling music of the wind, the sun's glance, and the rush of the lightning; which calls on the mountain and the sea, and beast and bird, and man, to join his full heart,—all these shall be sweet and elevating, but we shall leave his pernicious curse to perish where it fell. The old prophets,—fear of the people, the rulers, the priests, could not awe them to silence, nor gold buy smooth things from the prophet's tongue. View them as patriots whom danger roused from the repose of life; as pious men awakened by concern for the public virtue,—and nobler men never spoke speech. Little needs now be said of the New Testament, of the simple truth that rustles in its leaves, its parables, epistles, where Paul lifts up his manly voice, and John, or whoso wrote the words, pours out the mystic melody of his faith. Why tell the deep words of Jesus? Have we exhausted their meaning? The world—has it outgrown love to God and man? They still act in gentle bosoms, giving strength to the strong, and justice and meekness and charity and faith to beautiful souls, long tried and oppressed. There is no need of new words to tell of this.

Call the Bible master, we do not see the excellence it has. Take it as other books, we have its beauty, truth, religion, not its deformities, fables, and theology. Its truths not only sustain themselves, but the mass of errors connected therewith. Truth can never pass away.

Men sometimes fear the Bible will be destroyed by freedom of thought and freedom of speech. Let it perish if such be the case. Truth cannot fear the light, nor are men so mad as to forsake a well of living water. All the free-thinking in the world could not destroy the Iliad; how much less the truths of the Bible! But the Bible is made for man, not man for the Bible. Its truths are old as creation, repeated more or less purely in every tongue. They came from God through the soul of man. They have exhausted neither God nor the soul. Man is greater than the Bible.

Theodore Parker. (Much compressed from the "Bible" chapters in his "Discourse of Religion": printed also in the volume of selections called his "Views of Religion.")

The Bible a Record of the Evolution of the Soul.

Every morning the sun rolls over fields, forests, flowers, and fruits which itself has created. The Bible moves among men, netted all over with the sweetest and tenderest emotions of the human soul, which itself has created as the revelation and the voice of God. He who knows only the print and the type of the book knows only a painted sun. What the Bible is can be remotely appreciated only by those who can perceive what are its fruits. Like a cloud in summer, every drop brings forth a flower. All theories of the nature of the sun may be assailed, but the sun shines on and does not care. All theories respecting the history and the structure of the Bible may be mooted and disputed, but there it is, a book whose fruits rise higher, smell sweeter, taste more flavorsome, inspire more hearts, than any or all others that have ever been produced upon the plane of human life. The Bible is the record of the progressive unfolding of knowl-

edge in respect to social and spiritual things through vast ages. And the inspiration of God consisted in that impulse of natural law, of social institution, of reflection, of experiment, and of findings-out of life, and a record of it by men competent to understand and give it the largest form. They were men above their day, able to concentrate in their own consciousness the meaning of all these things that had been gradually found out by the myriad of men, and give them authentic form. . . .

As to the fear of losing the Bible, there will remain its characteristics—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. Does anybody want with miscreant club to brain *that* Bible? and if that is the meaning of sacred Scripture, who wants to destroy it? But when men, uninstructed, attempt to work in as a part of the testimony of God the things that are but the record of human weaknesses and human misunderstandings, then we set the world agog, and then there are opportunities for men most active and successful in that [destroying work,] because to a large extent they have the truth with them. . . . Should I, if I had stood upon the Acropolis, and discovered that there were spiders in the great temple, or that there was a leak in the roof, or that there was dust settled upon the cornices, blow up the building because I saw these specks in it? Yet there are men going about the country with witty eloquence deriding this grandest collection of the evolutions of human consciousness towards the highest ideal. They have no conception of the grandeur of this movement, nor of the grandeur of its results. . . . What if there be anachronisms in the Bible? What does that amount to? What if there should be mistakes in dates, stumblings of good men, worn out and wasted customs still embalmed? What if there should be imperfect laws permitted? What if the dust and the detritus of wretched peoples and corrupt ages should still be found here and there in the Bible? They are but fleeting elements, and have their use in marking the stages of development by which the human intelligence rose from darkness into relative light, and the conscience from being soiled into relative purity, and the higher faith, being born, gathered to itself treasure of riches. The Bible is not a book set down and written as John Milton wrote "Paradise Lost", nor is it a book written as a man writes a history. It is not a book; it is a series of books with intervals of hundreds of years between. It is the record of the progress of the human race in their development into the divine idea through the medium of right-living themselves. It is the serial history of the construction of the noblest elements that belong to human consciousness.

Henry Ward Beecher. (From "Seven Sermons on Evolution and Religion".)

The Inspiration in, and beyond, All Bibles.

There is a Divine Being back of nature and within man; the Life and Soul of all existence; the Intelligence thinking out its laws; the Will energizing its forces. All life of nature opens back into this Divine Being. All life of man opens, within, into God. Every stream of life leads up into the one Spring and Fount of Being. There is a natural connection open between the soul of man and the Divine Spirit. The stream's bed may be clogged with the debris of life, the fountain-head of the divine in man may be choked, until there seems to be no longer any up-flowing life of God in the human soul. But it is only needful that the stream-bed shall be opened, that the sands shall be cleared in the mouth of the spring, to find the water of life flow once more, fresh, free, and full as the tides of the Eternal Being. God *can* speak to man. God *must* speak to man, somewhere, somehow, sometime. The Father cannot leave his child without guidance, counsel, help. . . . God *does* in reality speak *to* man, *in man*. He speaks to every child of earth through the deep essential voices of his own nature: through the voice of affection, pure and sweet; the voice of reason, clear and calm; the voice

of conscience, high and holy; the voice of the will, strong and commanding. The breath of life which heaves the heart, the mind, the conscience, and the will, is none other than the breath of the Spirit in whom "we live and move and have our being". . . .

Human progress is always from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to the general, from an isolated fact to the sweep of a law. Thus, the reality of the divine inspiration has been gradually expanding on the human consciousness, until that which was at first found on certain spots of earth, at certain times of history, amid certain privileged races, within certain narrow spheres of thought and action, is seen to be a reality of all the earth, of all races, of all time, of all men, of all truth and life.

I. The first step of this education of man into the full doctrine of Inspiration, as far as our own religion is concerned, was the belief which our fathers held so strenuously, and which we, their children, ought to hold just as strenuously,—the belief that our sacred books hold the words of men who themselves were inspired of God. "God speaks in the Bible." Thus said our forefathers, out of the depth of a true spiritual consciousness. Mark well the limitation of this statement. We may not say, as our fathers would have said, that the whole collection of writings which make up the Bible are the words of inspired men; that all these writings, in all their parts, breathe the spirit of God; or that those writers who do breathe as from the Divine Spirit within them are all equally God-breathed. Concerning these distinctions, judgment may be briefly expressed in words which I have used before: "Wherever there is a flash of light, spiritual or ethical; wherever the dark problems of man's origin and nature and destiny grow luminous; wherever the being and personality and character of God come forth from the darkness, thrilling us with a fresh sense of worship, with higher faith and hope and love,—there is a real revelation to our spirits of truths which were unveiled ages ago in the consciousness of Hebrew saints and seers. Such revelation was an inspiration, real and true; a deep breathing in the spirit of man by the Spirit of God."

With a rapidity which is simply astonishing, thoughtful minds in all the Churches are coming to make the distinction in which lies all hope for the future reverence of the Bible; and the battle of a reasonable faith is well-nigh won. But, when all has been yielded to the human character of these writings which criticism, scholarship, a sound reason, a true conscience, and a sober common sense demand, . . you and I may be just as sure as were our fathers, who saw none of the difficulties surrounding us, that here at least we hold a book in which the very voice of God echoes down upon our souls: that, through it, we hear words which are even to this day charged with the awful tones of the Eternal Spirit. How would the faith in the reality of a divine inspiration have been kept alive through those wastes of time in which men have heard so few whispers of the Eternal, but for this book to which they could always turn, and feel sure that in its words, so awful yet so tender, so simple though so majestic, so searching while so comforting, they were hearkening to the very voice of God, sure by the soul's unerring instinct that here were the tones of the heavenly Father?

II. The second step in our progress into the true doctrine of Inspiration is the recognition that there is a divine inspiration in *other* sacred books than our own. Other peoples, as our fathers knew, have had their sacred books, reverenced by them with a devoutness in no wise surpassed by our feelings toward the Bible. In the absence of any first-hand knowledge of those books, it was easy for our fathers to deny to them the claim of inspiration.. . . .

(*Noble passages omitted here.*)

Have *we* not reached far enough in our knowledge of God to see that, were he to reveal himself to any one race alone, leaving the rest of mankind, in their gropings after light upon the dark problem of earth and in their struggle with sin, without the light and warmth of truth, he could not be God?

"So welcome I from every source
The tokens of that Primal Force
Older than heaven itself, yet new
As the young heart it reaches to,
Beneath whose steady impulse rolls
The tidal wave of human souls,—
Guide, Comforter, and Inward Word,
The Eternal Spirit of the Lord."

III. We take another step upward in the true idea of Inspiration. God has spoken, we say, to the ancients. Of that we are sure. "Holy men of *old* spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost." God has spoken, we are at last ready to admit, to other holy men of old than those of Hebrew blood. But—so our fathers would have said—God does not *now* speak to men as he did of old. . . .

We affirm that God *liveth;* that he is thinking and working, that he *still* speaketh; that in the souls of men, now as then, is to be heard the whispers of the still, small voice; that within the holy place is to be felt the breath of the Spirit, Infinite and Eternal:—

"God is not dumb, that he should speak no more;
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness,
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find; but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore."

IV. One other step remains for us, in tracing the climb of thought by which man has risen to the vision of the Divine Inspiration in which we rejoice to-day, beholding it overflow into *all spheres of rightful human thought and action.. . .* There is no line that can be drawn around the sphere of the divine action. You cannot shut the Most High up to any petty provincialisms. You cannot find work enough for the Infinite Spirit in your parish guilds. You cannot keep God out of his own world. He claims all the varied fields of his own creation as the spheres for his Spirit's action. All lines of true human thought and work focus in religion. Every faculty bourgeons into worship. Every knowledge and every power forms a step in the great world's "altar stairs" that "slope through darkness up to God." Men of business, physicians, inventors, political economists, statesmen, novelists, dramatists, painters, musicians,—all may feel the inbreathing of the Divine Spirit, all may be most truly inspired. Our old Bible, bolder far than the timid men who laud it so highly, dared to say [something like this] long, long ago. . .

Thus, we climb, through the successive stages of the development of man's consciousness of Inspiration,—through a belief in the inspiration of the men who wrote in *our* Bible, of the men who wrote in the *other* bibles of humanity, of the saints of *all times*, of the men who, in *every sphere of life*, seek truth and do their fellows service,—to the full thought of an inspiration of God within man, in all lands, all ages, and all activities of mind. In every great thought and in every noble feeling which breathes our souls out to larger life there is the breath of the Infinite Spirit of Truth, of Beauty, and of Goodness,—the Spirit in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." You and I may be inspired. You and I *are* inspired, daily, though we know it not,—conscious of no solemnity, as of a divine presence; catching no whispers of the Spirit in the aspirations which swell within our minds and hearts and consciences; feeling not the throbs of God in the energy which moves us to be up and doing worthily. . . How lofty life becomes in this sense of the divine inspirations! How full of sacred dignity our daily tasks! How responsible the powers concerning whose employ we had thought so lightly! How solemn grows that easy stifling of intellectual convictions, of conscientious impulses, and of spiritual aspirations which now loom through "the abysmal depths of personality" into that awful sin against which Paul lifted up his warning voice,—"Quench not the Spirit!"

R. Heber Newton.—(From a sermon on "Inspiration".)

How to Buy a Bible, and How to Read it with the Children.

Buy a Bible, my brothers! The current coin of the land, in the shops of our best booksellers, may have failed to buy for you a real Bible. No noble book is ever to be made your own in this easy fashion. Ruskin tells us that the great picture will not give itself to us unless we give ourselves to it. The Bible must have its price. The best comes dearest. If you will not pay, you cannot buy. Pay for the real Bible your costliest offering of mind and heart. Spend upon it, day by day, your careful, reverent study, until beneath your love the Book warms into life; and, having proven well your loyalty, this teacher of the soul opens its soul to you and whispers—Henceforth I call you not servant but friend. Wait in these courts until the Eternal Wisdom, who walks within this temple, turns her face upon you, "mystic, wonderful"; and the common places grow refulgent with a new and heavenly beauty, and you humbly say,—This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Thus buying Bibles for yourselves, my friends, see that your children buy themselves the Bible in the same good coin. Do not hesitate to read with them these stories of the ancients because there may be the commingling of legend with history, of myth with fact. The Spirit of Holiness breathing through these tales will inspire the souls of the children, without restraint from the questions that the reason may raise. Tell them no lies if they ask you questions. Read these ancient stories *as* stories, of good and noble men; stories written down long ago, and told from father to son through longer ages before they were thus written out. Leave the children to detect the legendary elements. I find them quick enough at that work without parental help. The bright child feels the unreal in the tales that he most loves, but he loves them none the less, perhaps all the more, because of the spell upon his imagination that he would not break; while through them, upon his open soul, streams in the holy power of these sacred stories. Do you concern yourselves with impressing the moral of these God-breathed tales.

Read with your children the stories of the dear Master, and make his life grow real to them, till he shall draw them after him in the steps of his most holy life. . . . The best safeguard against bad taste in literature or life is the formation of a good taste. These Bible-books are books to learn to love which is the making of a man.

Train the children to commit to memory the choicest passages of the Bible. John Ruskin doubtless at the time rebelled against the strict rule of his good aunt, which kept him busy on the Sundays memorizing the Scriptures; but he owns himself thankful now for the discipline which stored his mind with their creative words. What a treasury of holy thoughts and influences does he carry within him, who has written on his mind such passages as the nineteenth, twenty-third, ninety-first, one hundred and third, and one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalms; the third and eighth chapters of Proverbs; the fortieth chapter of Isaiah; the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians! In the stress and strain of conflict, when the air is dimmed with the dust of the contending forces and the vision grows confused, it is a saving sound to hear the ringing call of Duty, from the hills where One watcheth over the battlefield.

R. Heber Newton. (Compressed from Chapter VII. of his "Right and Wrong Uses of the Bible".)

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